



Maine Department of Conservation
Natural Areas Program

Pedicularis furbishiae S. Wats.

Furbish's Lousewort

Habitat: Shrub- or herb-dominated seepy circumneutral riverbanks, between the forest edge and the summer water level, St. John River. [Non-tidal rivershore (non-forested, seasonally wet)]

Range: Banks of the St. John River in Maine and New Brunswick.

Phenology: Flowers mid-July - August.

Family: Orobanchaceae

Aids to Identification: Furbish's lousewort is unique among louseworts because of its yellow flower with a 5-lobed calyx. It has fern-like leaves, occurring in a basal rosette and continuing up the stem. In flower, it produces a stem 40-100 cm high with 1 or more cylindrical racemes of tubular yellow flowers, each flower about 1 cm long. The racemes elongate as the flowers develop into fruits.



Illustration from Britton & Brown's Illustrated Flora of the Northern United States and Canada, 2nd ed.

Ecological characteristics: This plant, endemic to the banks of the St. John River, has very specific habitat requirements. It grows on a narrow strip of sloped riverbank which is damp, yet not too close to the water, and close enough to the forest to benefit from the shade. It is found in mixed shrub and herb associations with some common roadside asters and clovers, as well as rare species, such as bird's-eye primrose, prairie rattlesnake root, and St. John tansy. The open habitat required of Furbish's lousewort is maintained by the yearly scouring of the ice. Like all louseworts, the plant is hemiparasitic, requiring connection to a host plant through haustoria on the roots.

Synonyms:

Rarity of *Pedicularis furbishiae*

| | | |
|--------------------------|------------|--|
| State Rank: | S2 | Imperiled in Maine because of rarity or vulnerability to further decline. |
| New England Rank: | Division 1 | Globally rare plant occurring in New England: Only a few occurrences exist within New England. |
| Global Rank: | G2 | Imperiled globally. |

Status of *Pedicularis furbishiae*

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|------------------------|------------|--|
| Federal Status: | Endangered | Listed as Endangered at the national level. |
| State Status: | Endangered | Rare and in danger of being lost from the state in the foreseeable future; or federally listed as Endangered. Listing criteria met: Endemic to Maine, Special habitat, Declining populations, Vulnerable to human activity |



- ▲ Historical (before 1982)
● Recent (1982- present)

Known Distribution in Maine:

This rare plant has been documented from a total of 12 town(s) in the following county(ies): Aroostook.

Dates of documented observations are: 18XX, 1900, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1984, 1991 (3), 1993 (3), 1994, 1995 (2), 1997 (24), 1999, 2000 (24), 2001 (14), 2002 (11)

Reason(s) for rarity:

Endemic species with a naturally small range. Its range is being further depleted by pollution along the lower St. John River.

Conservation considerations:

Maintaining a forested buffer at the top of the riverbank is crucial to the persistence of this plant. Some populations have declined after trees at the top of the bank were removed for the view; at others, the original narrow buffer between the river and farm fields has eroded away. The St. John River Resource Protection Plan, which applies to the upriver part of the habitat, includes standards for forestry adjacent to lousewort habitat; assuring that those practices are always followed is important. Some populations could be harmed if all-terrain vehicle use of the rivershore habitat increases.

The information in this fact sheet was downloaded from the Natural Areas Program's Biological and Conservation Database on 10 MAY 2004. We are grateful to our Botanical Advisory Group for additional information on particular species, and in particular, to Arthur Haines for his assistance with identifying characteristics and taxonomic questions. Nomenclature follows Haines and Vining's *Flora of Maine* (V.F. Thomas Press, 1998); where older works refer to a plant by another name, it is given under "Synonyms". The Natural Areas Program, within the Department of Conservation, maintains the most comprehensive source of information on Maine's rare or endangered plants and rare or exemplary natural communities, and is a member of the Association for Biodiversity Information.

If you know of locations for this plant or would like more information on this species,
please contact the Natural Areas Program
State House Station 93, Augusta, Maine 04333; telephone (207) 287-8044.

